Distr.
GENERAL

IDB.18/16/Add.2
11 November 1997

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Industrial Development Board

Resumed eighteenth session
Vienna, Vienna, November 1997
Agenda item 7

[redacted]

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR SCIENCE AND HIGH TECHNOLOGY

Note by the Secretariat [redacted]

Summary

Presents the views of the Government of Italy on the proposed transfer of the International Centre for Science and High Technology.

ICS: Transfer to UNESCO

1. In recent years the Italian Government has been pursuing a greater rationalization of the United Nations institutions based in Italy by promoting the concentration of similar activities within the same organizations and trying to avoid duplications. To this effect it is the intention of the Italian Government to promote, in close agreement with the international organizations concerned, the transfer of the International Centre for Science and High Technology (ICS) of Trieste, under the umbrella of UNESCO. A similar decision was taken two years ago, when the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) was moved from IAEA to UNESCO. In fact, we are convinced that by this transfer greater synergies among the institutions of the Trieste Scientific Pole could be achieved.

2. The Scientific Pole of Trieste includes the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), founded by the Nobel Prize-winner Prof. Abdus Salam, and followed by the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), the Third World Academy of Science (TWAS) and, lately, by the International Centre for Science and High Technology. The centres operate according to a similar pattern which is based on the ICTP training model. Some of these scientific institutions, along with the Regional Office for Science and Technology in Europe (ROSTE), based in Venice, are set up within the legal framework of UNESCO, while ICGEB is a separate organization with its own constituency and decision-making organs.

3. The Italian Government is firmly convinced that the harmonization in the framework of UNESCO would allow the conditions for an even more successful integration between training and research activities, and would enable ICS to further develop its own research component, in the interest of the developing countries. In addition, the relationship between the relevant institutions of Eastern and Western European countries in the field of science and culture would take advantage of the further enhancement of ROSTE, which could promote synergic relations with other areas of the world, in particular with the countries of the Mediterranean Basin.

For reasons of economy, this document has been printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies of documents to meetings.

V.97-27945 (E) (a-1997/pmo-9)

Distr.: 13 November 1997

4. In the context of the ongoing reform process, Member States agreed on the need for UNIDO to concentrate on those support functions in which the Organization has a comparative advantage over the multilateral development organizations and bilateral assistance.

5. Following a long and constructive debate, Member States agreed that the above implies discontinuation of a number of activities, among which the Business Plan specifically mentions "research and industrial studies which are not clearly target oriented" and the "promotion of advanced technologies without proven industrial use". It must be noted that in the present situation ICS is primarily devoted to training people from scientific and technological institutions and to networking research and development centres, while it has only a very limited financial capacity to develop its own research potential. We are convinced that within the institutional framework of UNESCO, ICS could further develop its core research component, while continuing to implement, in close collaboration with UNIDO, the work programme related to industrial technology development.

6. The international technology centres established by UNIDO, which include the International Centre for Science and High Technology (ICS), belong to Subprogramme C.1.2: Technological Capacity-building, which is part of Major Programme C: Strengthening of Industrial Capacities. As specified in the 1998-1999 programme and budget document, the objective of the is to assist institutions and, through the Subprogramme upgraded support rendered by these institutions, industrial enterprises in recipient countries in their efforts towards identification, development, adaptation and commercialization of industrial technologies, thereby reducing investment risks and enhancing the absorptive capacity for investments. The Subprogramme will focus its activities particularly on advisory services on technology policies/management as well as on support to the management of research and development activities, on support to Governments, to research and development institutions and to private sector associations in strengthening indigenous capacities and networks for technological innovation in industry. UNIDO's specific role in this matter, therefore, is to provide a mechanism for effectively linking technology promotion with investment opportunities, while research itself is not specific to UNIDO.

7. The proposal to move the ICS project from UNIDO to UNESCO does not imply an unfavourable evaluation of UNIDO's management but it is solely based upon and moved by criteria of harmonization with similar institutions operating within the framework of UNESCO and to better respond to the priorities set up in the Business Plan adopted by Member States.

8. Italy is proposing the mutually agreed transfer of ICS to UNESCO, and seeks the endorsement of the Board to this proposal for final decision to be taken by the General Conference, which would be expected to also give the necessary mandate for the adoption of an agreement between UNIDO and UNESCO to develop their future cooperation on the matter of industrial technology.